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Communiqué

Alliance Quebec condemns Reform Party vote on Official Languages Act

MONTREAL, OCTOBER 17, 1994 - "Self-centred, short-sighted and un-Canadian." That's how Alliance Quebec President Michael Hamelin described the Reform Party's call to repeal the Official Languages Act. Reform members adopted the policy at a weekend convention in Ottawa.

"One of the cornerstones of the Canadian constitution is our country's two official languages, which are promoted and protected by the Official Languages Act" Hamelin noted. "By calling for the repeal of this act the Reform Party has chosen to join the Bloc Québécois in calling for unilingualism in Canada. Make no mistake about it – both parties are headed in the same direction – towards the breakup of Canada."

English-speaking Quebecers – a population of about 800,000 – are an integral part of Quebec and Canada. As a linguistic minority in Quebec, English-speaking people have built an impressive array of institutions - hospitals, schools, universities, libraries and social service agencies which contribute to the greater Quebec and Canadian society. The Official Languages Act is an essential support to help minority language communities to continue to make this kind of contribution to Canadian life.

Mr. Hamelin added: "The political and legislative changes of the past 20 years have lead to a substantial decline in the number of English-speaking residents in Quebec. Consequently, the English-speaking community and its institutions are threatened. In the next 8-10 months this largely bilingual and resolutely federalist group of Quebecers may well face its greatest political challenges. For the Reform Party to be advocating that our community, and the equally integral part of this country, the French-speaking communities across Canada lose their support and protection under Canada's Official Languages Act is self-centred, short-sighted and un-Canadian, and it's good news to all those who seek the break-up of the country. They do not understand the Act, and hey ought to by now."

Alliance Quebec is a voice of Quebec's English-speaking minority. The Alliance is a volunteer group that brings together individuals, groups and associations from the four corners of Quebec.

"The Reform Party has avoided meeting with us to hear what this community might have to say," Mr. Hamelin continued. "Their excuse is that they see us as a "special interest group." Well, they are right. The English-speaking community has some very special interests. One is for a unified, generous and open Canadian society."

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